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WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 004735

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS; FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2016

TAGS: PGOV PINR KPAL KWBG

SUBJECT: BIO OF MOHAMAD SHBEIR, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY IN GAZA

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Following is biographic information developed by post  
on Mohamad Shbeir, the former President of the Islamic  
University in Gaza.

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MOHAMAD SHBEIR  
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¶2. (C) Mohamad Shbeir was president of the Islamic University in Gaza until his resignation in 2005. He taught biology at that university from 1996 until 2000. Shbeir served as a member of the Palestinian Central Election Commission, but resigned in August 2005. An employee who worked at the CEC while Shbeir served as a member told ConGen FSN political specialist that Shbeir is an Islamist. Shbeir studied in Jordan (at some point prior to the late 1980s) and--according to West Bank Fatah activists--had strong local connections to the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Following his education in Jordan, Shbeir graduated from West Virginia University in the 1990s (exact date unknown). Although formally an independent, the CEC employee who worked with him and sources in the President's office in Gaza report that Shbeir has close ties to Hamas, and both his wife and son were employed by the Hamas-led PA government after Hamas' electoral victory in 2006. He is currently working part time as a researcher at the Islamic University in Gaza.

¶3. (C) Shbeir has strong Islamist credentials, but a Gaza-based ConGen PD employee who worked with him at the Islamic University of Gaza described him as a political moderate. Shbeir is known to the ConGen public diplomacy section, having cooperated with the PD section and participated in its programming prior to the Hamas PLC victory.

WALLES